(e) by when the panel is likely to be appointed?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (e) Official versions of most of the Wars and Conflicts fought since Independence are available. A Committee has been recently constituted under the Chairmanship of former Defence Secretary Shri N.N. Vohra comprising Lt. Gen. Satish Nambiar and Dr. S.N. Prasad, to review the issue of the publication of four of these Histories.

Supply of defective sleeping bags for troops in Siachen Glacier

1688. SHRI K.B. KRISHNA MURTHY: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Quality Assurance Officer of the concerned procurement wing cleared consignment of defective sleeping bags for our troops in Siachen Glacier post during 1998-99;

(b) whether three consignments of defective bags were cleared without testing the sample bag and the fourth consignment of defective bags was cleared after the inspection of the sample bags; and

(c) whether these sleeping bags were purchased at a cost of Rs. 7.50 crores and were ment to be used at lower altitudes?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) During 1992-93, the first three lots of sleeping bags received from M/s Moncler, France were cleared by the Quality Assurance Officers based on the visual parameters only without comparing them with the sample bag which was not made available nor asked for. For the 4th lot, the inspection team did not make any specific endorsement clearing the stock for issue to the user units as the sample available did not bear the signature of the approving / competent authority. The value of the supply order for 8588 sleeping bag was Rs. 7.65 crores approximately and they were purchased for use at high altitudes and extreme cold climates.

Declaring Bhuj as a field station for Army

1689. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that senior officials of the Army have been repeatedly pressing for declaring quake-ravaged district of Bhuj as a field station;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor;

(c) the Government's reaction thereto; and

(d) by when a decision is likely to be taken in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (d) The proposals have been received from Service Headquarters to declare Bhuj District as Field Areas so that some of the concessions which are admissible in Field Areas could be made available to the personnel who suffered loss of life and property due to earthquake. The matter has been considered by the Government. Under the existing order Field Area is an areas where troops are deployed near the border for operational requirements and where imminence of hostilities and associated risks to life exist. The status of areas cannot be changed by occurance of a natural calamity with the objective of giving some benefits to the personnel affected by the tragedy. Theproposal therefore was not agreed to. However, taking into consideration the exceptional circumstances and the dedicated work done by the Defence Services personnel posted at Bhuj, it has been decided to grant suitable honorarium to such personnel.

Fitting of faulty guns in armoured vehicles by ordnance factory, Medak, A.P.

1690. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Ordnance Factory at Medak in Andhra Pradesh had fitted the infantry armoured vehicles sent for possible use in Kargil conflict, with faulty guns;

(b) whether on any other occasion the Pune based Central Armoured Fighting Vehicles Depot also rejected the vehicles for the same reason;

(c) if so, whether any inquiry has been made by Government into the matter and the implications in the operational use of such armoured vehicles; and

(d) what action has been taken by Government in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) No, Sir.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) Does not arise.

(d) Does not arise